

Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research

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Loy Henderson Conference Room

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Ed, thank you very much. Ambassadors, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to be here this morning and to welcome you on behalf of Secretary Powell. The Secretary, as you may know, is in Marrakech and Algiers today, after attending the ministerial meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe in Maastricht. Tonight he will be in Brussels for the meeting of NATO's North Atlantic Council.

One of the reasons the Secretary went to Maastricht was to join other OSCE ministers in welcoming Germany's offer to hold a conference devoted to anti-Semitism at the end of April 2004 in Berlin. This will be a follow-up to the OSCE meeting last June in Vienna, which for the first time identified anti-Semitism as a human rights issue. At the Berlin meeting, the United States hopes that the OSCE will adopt a number of specific measures to help deal with the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe and elsewhere in the world.

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It is an honor for me to speak to this plenary meeting of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research. This is the second and final meeting of the Task Force under the United States' Chair. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the exceptional contribution that Professor Yehuda Bauer, the Academic Adviser to the Task Force, has made since its inception. Professor Bauer, your knowledge, energy, and counsel have been invaluable to the Task Force, which has come so far and accomplished so much in just a few short years. We thank you very much for everything you have done.

And I would also like to acknowledge the tremendous work of Task Force Fellow Karel Fracapane. Karel, thank you for your dedication to the daily work of the Task Force and to helping make this plenary meeting such a success.

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The Holocaust Task Force is a special and important organization. You are consensus-based yet without a bureaucracy to support you—a remarkable feat considering all you achieve. The funds provided by member countries go exclusively into financing projects and funding a Task Force Fellow to support the Chair.

The Task Force has grown from a handful of countries after the First Stockholm International Forum in 1998 to now 16 members with the addition of Norway earlier this morning. Through education, remembrance, and research, you have helped preserve the memory of the millions of Holocaust victims so that we may never forget. Through your support of academic work, documentary films, and other projects, you also seek to help all of us fathom the unfathomable, the great evil of the twentieth century that was the Holocaust—so that “Never Again” is not only a wish, but also an unwavering objective not just of our policies but of our lives.

Here are a few examples of how you are making a difference:

- Austria, Germany, and Slovakia, working together at a seminar in Vienna, have trained Slovakian teachers to teach the Holocaust, and Germany and Slovakia have developed a package of related educational materials to use in schools.
- France and Israel have worked closely with people and institutions in Romania. Romanian teachers have traveled to France, and Latvian instructors to Luxembourg, for in-depth seminars on teaching the Holocaust.
- In Latvia, in conjunction with Sweden and the United States, the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Riga is identifying long-unrecorded names of Holocaust victims to preserve them for history.
- The Task Force, working with France and Poland, has funded a documentary film about the Belzec camp in Poland. Israel and Poland will create another documentary detailing the history of the Majdanek concentration camp, to be shown at the memorial museum there.

In addition to the impact these projects have in raising consciousness about the Holocaust, another strength of the Holocaust Task Force comes from the network of contacts you create—with other governments, NGOs, democracy and human rights activists, and informed citizens, to name just a few—all working to make our world a more tolerant and enlightened place.

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Intolerance still stalks our world. Your effort is, sadly, still relevant to protect our daily lives against the purveyors of hate.

- On November 15, suicide terrorists set off bombs at two synagogues in Istanbul. Twenty-seven people—Jews and Muslims alike—were killed. Over 300 were wounded. Five days later terrorists struck Istanbul with another twin bombing, killing 30 and injuring over 400. Turkish authorities are working tirelessly to find the terrorists responsible and bring them to justice. As Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan vowed, “Terrorism has no religion, race, and nationality. Wherever it is, we will stand against it.”
- That same day, a Jewish school building near Paris was burned to the ground. French President Jacques Chirac immediately announced an anti-Semitism task force, and warned the criminals that “when you attack a Jew in France, understand that it is all of France that is being attacked.”
- In October a member of the German parliament made anti-Semitic statements, and in November he was ousted from his party’s parliamentary caucus. This followed the dismissal on November 4 of a German army general who expressed support for the parliamentarian’s anti-Semitic views.
- Last month in Greece, a composer claimed that his own comments concerning the Jewish people were not anti-Semitic. U.S. Ambassador Tom Miller spoke for all of us when he denounced this composer’s words, noting his own sadness and regret that such an important cultural figure would criticize policy in ethnic terms.

- Also last month (November 18), the domestic and satellite TV station of the terrorist organization Hizbollah broadcast despicable representations of anti-Semitism portrayed in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Our ambassador in Lebanon, our chargé d'affaires in Syria, and our department spokesman here in Washington immediately told those governments that such broadcasts have no place in the civilized world and do not contribute to the climate of mutual understanding and tolerance the Middle East needs.
- At this fall's Organization of the Islamic Conference opening session on October 16, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad in his address made anti-Semitic remarks. President Bush confronted him October 20 at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit, telling Mahathir that his remarks were "... wrong and divisive ... and stand squarely against what I believe in."
- On November 20, in Terre Haute, Indiana, the tiny "CANDLES" Holocaust museum—Children of Auschwitz Nazi Deadly Lab Experiment Survivors—was burned to the ground. Investigators found a fire accelerant and the phrase "Remember Timmy McVeigh" scrawled on a brick wall. The Midwest office of the Anti-Defamation League has offered a reward for information, and the FBI, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, and police and fire officials are investigating.

Anti-Semitism is not just an attack against the Jewish people; it is an attack on the foundations of civilized society itself. As Secretary Powell said in the Capitol Rotunda this past spring, "The Holocaust revealed deep fissures in civilization's foundation and below it, the abyss to which humankind can descend."

Political leadership must speak out. We shall not rest until anti-Semitism ends up with the other discredited "isms." We must follow your leadership and teach our teachers, our students, our police and our political and business leaders that anti-Semitism is not acceptable in a civilized society.

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Education has always been the best antidote to ignorance and hatred. Educating the next generation of Europeans, Americans, and others around the world on the lessons of the Holocaust is at the heart of the work of your Task Force. I commend your groundbreaking teacher-training programs—including seminars on "teaching to teach the Holocaust"—and your support of documentary films and other projects that share your goals.

Their impact cannot be underestimated: they help us not only in our solemn pledge to bear witness to the past, but also in our mission to make our future safe.

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I tell people that when I said to my family in 1976 that I had chosen to work at the State Department, it was a message that my grandparents took with disbelief, my parents with some worry. The State Department, they said, "might not be for people like us." There is much in this department's history to have made that a perception my family did not conjure.

Today I am proud to be a part of a State Department that spoke, at the beginning alone, for the OSCE to take up the issue of anti-Semitism—and that today speaks openly and acts aggressively

around the world in support of the values we believe in: freedom, tolerance, pluralism, and the commitment to defend those values for us and for others.

So I really do welcome you to the State Department today. I thank you for your leadership to make sure this world does not just remember, but never forgets.

I salute your efforts and continued commitment, and I wish you every success. We are with you.